

### *The Dictionary of Accepted Ideas*

*Vox populi, vox dei.*  
—The Wisdom of Nations

One could wager that any public idea or generally accepted convention is foolishness, by simple virtue of the fact that it suits the majority.  
—Chamfort, *Maxims*

## **A**

- ABELARD: No need to have any idea of his philosophy, or even to know the titles of his works. Allude discretely to his mutilation by Fulbert. Tomb of Heloise and Abelard: if someone tells you it's apocryphal, cry, "You are robbing me of my illusions!"
- ABSALOM: If he had worn a wig, Job could never have killed him. Teasing nickname for a bald acquaintance.
- ABSINTH: Ultra-violent poison: one glass and you're dead. Journalists drink it while writing their articles. Has killed more soldiers than the Bedouins.
- ACADEMY (French): Scoff at it but try to join if possible.
- ACCIDENT: Add "deplorable" or "unfortunate"—as if a misfortune could ever be cause for celebration.
- ACHILLES: Add "fleet-footed": it makes people think you've read Homer.
- ACTRESSES: The ruin of good sons. Are frightfully oversexed, participate in orgies, run through millions, wind up in the poorhouse. "I beg your pardon! Some of them are excellent wives and mothers."
- ADMIRAL: Always brave. Swears only by "his shivering timbers."
- ADOLESCENT: Never begin a scholastic prize-giving speech other than with "Young adolescents" (which is a pleonasm).
- ADVERTISING: A source of wealth.
- AGRICULTURE: Mother's milk from the Fatherland (which is a contradiction, but no matter). One should encourage it. Short of manpower.
- AIR: Always beware of drafts. Invariably what's in the air never matches the temperature. If there's a chill in it, the air itself is warm, and vice versa.
- ALABASTER: Used to describe the loveliest parts of a woman's body.
- ALBION: Always preceded by "pale" or "perfidious." Napoleon came very close to conquering it. Praise it: England the free.
- ALCIBIADES: Famous for his dog's tail. Type of debauchee. Frequented Aspasia.
- ALCOHOLISM: Cause of all modern illnesses (v. *absinth* and *tobacco*).
- AMBITION: Always preceded by "insane," unless it's noble.
- AMBITIOUS: In the provinces, anyone who draws attention to himself. "Goodness, I'm not ambitious!"—meaning selfish or incapable.
- AMERICA: Perfect example of injustice: it was Columbus who discovered it, but it is named for Amerigo Vespucci. If not for the discovery of America, we wouldn't have syphilis and Phylloxera. Praise it nonetheless, especially if one has never been there.

Lecture people about self-government.

ANDROCLES: Cite Androcles's lion apropos of tamers.

ANGEL: Works well in love and in literature.

ANIMALS: Ah, if the animals could talk! Some of them are more intelligent than men.

ANTICHRIST: Voltaire, Renan...

ANTIQUES: Are always of recent manufacture.

ANTIQUITY, *and everything related to it*: Cliché, and boring as hell.

ANTS: A good example to show a spendthrift. Suggested the idea of savings banks.

APLOMB: Always preceded by "infernal" or "unshakable."

APRICOTS: We won't have any again this year.

ARCHIMEDES: When hearing his name, say, "Eureka!" or "Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world." There is also Archimedes's screw, but one is not expected to know what it is.

ARCHITECTS: All morons. Always forget the staircase in houses.

ARCHITECTURE: There are only four types of architecture. Naturally we aren't counting the Egyptian, the Cyclopean, the Assyrian, the Indian, the Chinese, Gothic, Roman, etc.

ARISTOCRACY: Despise and envy it.

ARMY: Society's rampart.

ARSENIC: Can be found anywhere (remember Mme. Lafarge). There are certain populations that eat it regularly!

ART: Leads to the poorhouse. What good is it, since it is being replaced by mechanical processes that do the job better and faster?

ARTISTS: All jokers. Praise their disinterestedness [*Obs.*]. Be amazed that they dress like everyone else [*Obs.*]. Earn insane amounts, but spend it like water. Often invited to dinner in town. All women artists are sluts. What artists do can't be called work.

ASP: Animal known because of Cleopatra's basket of figs.

ASPHALT: Suppressed revolutions by preventing the building of barricades. All the same, is rather uncomfortable.

ASSASSIN: Always cowardly, even when he has been intrepid and daring. Less blameworthy than an arsonist.

ASTRONOMY: A fine science. Is of use only to the Navy. While on the subject, laugh at astrology.

ATHEIST: "A population of atheists could not survive."

ATTORNEY: More flattering than "lawyer."

AUTHOR: One should "know the great authors" no need to know their names.

## B

BACCALAUREATE: Thunder against it.

BACHELOR PAD: Always messy, with women's baubles lying about. Reeks of cigarette smoke. Extraordinary things must be lurking in it.

BACHELORS: All selfish and immoral. They should be taxed. Are destined for a lonely old age.

BACK: A clap on the back can give you tuberculosis.

BACKDROP (Theater): Is not painting. You just throw a can of paint haphazardly at the canvas, spread it around with a broom, and let distance and lighting create the illusion.

BACKROOM: Wax indignant when this word is spoken.

BAGNOLET: Town famous for its blind people.

BALDNESS: Always premature. Caused by youthful excesses or the hatching of great thoughts.

BALLOON: With balloons, we'll end up getting to the moon. We're a long way from being able to control them.

BANDITS: Always fierce.

BANKERS: All rich—Arabs, lynxes.

BANQUET: Festive and sincerely convivial occasions. One comes away with indelible memories, and never leaves without promising to see each other again next year. A wag should always refer to "the banquet of life," etc.

BARBER: Call him a "tonorial artist" or "Figaro." Louis XI's barber. Used to bleed people.

BASILICA: Pompous synonym for church; always imposing.

BASQUES: The best runners.

BATTLE: Always blood-soaked. There are always two victors, the conqueror and the conquered.

BEAR: Usually named Martin. Tell the story of the idiot who, thinking he saw a watch in the bear pit, climbed down to retrieve it and was eaten alive.

BEARD: Sign of strength. Too much beard makes one's hair fall out. Useful for protecting neckties.

BEDROOM OF AN OLD CASTLE: Henry IV always slept there.

BEER: Shouldn't be drunk: it causes colds.

BEETHOVEN: Do not pronounce "Bee-thoven." Swoon whenever one of his works is played.

BELLOWS: Never have occasion to use it.

BELL TOWER (village): Makes the heart beat faster.

BELLY: Say "abdomen" when there are ladies present.

BIBLE: The oldest book in the world.

BILLIARDS: Noble game—indispensable in the country.

BIRD: Desiring to be one and saying with a sigh, "Ah, wings, wings..." is the sign of a poetic soul.

BLACK: Always followed by "as ebony" or preceded by "jet." What is jet?

BLONDES: Warmer than brunettes (v. *brunettes*).

BLOODLETTING: Have yourself bled in the spring.

BLUESTOCKING: Disparaging term to designate any woman who is interested in intellectual matters. Quote Molière in support: “When the compass of her mind she stretches,” etc.

BOARDING SCHOOL: Use the English term if it’s for young ladies.

BOAT: Only in Bayonne are they built well.

BODY: If we knew how our bodies were put together, we wouldn’t dare budge.

BOIL: Sign of good health (v. *pimples*).

BONUSES (Holiday) Wax indignant at.

BOOK: No matter which one, always too long.

BOOTS: In hot weather, never fail to mention the boots of policemen or the shoes of mailmen (permissible only in the country, in the open). Boots are the only true footwear.

BREAD: One has no idea how much filth there is in it.

BREATH: Having bad breath makes one seem distinguished. Avoid allusions to its killing flies and remark that it comes from the stomach.

BRETONS: Good people, but stubborn.

BRONZE: Ancient metal.

BROOCH: Must always contain a lock of hair or a photograph.

BROTH: Is hearty. Impossible to distinguish from consommé.

BRUNETTES: Warmer than blondes (v. *blondes*).

BUDDHISM: “Pseudo religion of India” (definition from Bouillet’s Dictionary, 1st edition).

BUDGET: Never balanced.

BUFFON: Put on lace cuffs before writing.

BULL: Father of the calf. The ox is just its uncle.

BULLSHIT: Use this word only for swearing, and even then! (v. *doctor*).

BURIAL: Too often premature. Tell stories of corpses that had eaten their own arm to appease their hunger.

BUSINESS AFFAIRS: Come before everything. The most important thing in life. A woman should avoid talking about hers. The be-all and end-all.

BUTCHERS: Are terrible in times of revolution.

## C

CABINETMAKER: Laborer who mainly works with mahogany.

CABLE: People have no idea how strong a cable is: stronger than iron.

CACHET: Always preceded by “a certain.”

CALLING: Art, medicine, etc., are callings.

CAMEL: Has two humps and the dromedary has one. Or else, the camel has one hump and the dromedary has two. It gets confusing.

CANDOR: Always adorable. One is either filled with it or has none at all.

CANNONADE: Changes the weather.

CANNONBALL: The wind from one can make you blind.

CARRIAGE: Easier to rent than to own—this way, one doesn’t have to bother with servants or with perpetually sick horses.

CARTHUSIAN MONKS: Spend their time making chartreuse, digging their graves, and saying, “Brothers, we must all die.”

CARTRIDGE POUCH: Case for a French marshal’s baton.

CASTLE: Has always withstood a siege under Philip Augustus.

CAT: Cats are treacherous. Call them “tigers of the salon” (fashionable). Cut off their tails to prevent vertigo.

CATHOLICISM: Has had a very beneficial influence on the arts.

CAVALRY: Nobler than the infantry.

CAVES: The standard hideout of bandits. Are always full of snakes.

CEDAR: The one in the Botanical Gardens was brought back in a hat.

CELEBRITY: Concern yourself with the slightest detail of celebrities’ private lives, then denigrate them.

CELL (Prison): Always horrible. The straw is always damp. We have yet to find a pleasant one.

CENSORSHIP: Useful, no matter what they say.

CERUMEN: “Human wax.” Avoid removing it because it keeps insects from crawling into the ear cavities.

CHAMBER: Works well in official speeches: “Gentlemen, in this hallowed chamber...”

CHAMBERMAIDS: Prettier than their mistresses. Know all their secrets and betray them. Always dishonored by the young man of the house.

CHAMPAGNE: A standard feature of ceremonial dinners. Affect to despise it, saying, “It’s not really a wine.” Causes tipsiness in common people. “Russia consumes more of it than France!” Helped spread French ideas throughout Europe. Under the Regency, they did nothing but drink it.

CHATEAUBRIAND: Mainly known for the steak that bears his name.

CHEESE: Quote Brillat-Savarin’s aphorism: “A meal without cheese is like a beauty with only one eye.”

CHESS (Game of): Reflection of military tactics. All the great captains were excellent players. Too serious to be a game, too frivolous to be a science.

CHEST-PLATE: Never use this expression with reference to a woman’s breasts.

CHIAROSCURO: We don't know what this is.

CHILBLAIN: Sign of good health. Has just warmed up, after being cold.

CHILDREN: Affect a lyrical tenderness toward them—when people are around.

CHIMNEY: Smoke is always rising from one. Topic of discussion, with regard to heating.

CHIMNEY SWEEP: Wintertime's swallow.

CHINA: More fashionable than porcelain.

CHIVALRY: It's dead.

CHOLERA: Melons give you cholera. The cure is to drink lots of tea with rum.

CHRISTIANITY: Freed the slaves.

CHRISTMAS DINNER: The sausage makes the meal.

CIDER: Ruins the teeth.

CIGARS: Those of the Tobacco Authority are "all disgusting." The only good kinds are contraband.

CLARINET: Playing it makes you blind. Ex.: all blind people play the clarinet.

CLASSICS (The): One is supposed to know them.

CLEANSING: Said only when speaking of the foot-washing ceremony.

CLOAK: Always gray for romantic escapades.

CLOWN: Was double-jointed as a child.

CLUB: One should always belong to a political club. The exasperation of conservatives. Argument and confusion about the derivation of the word.

COBBLER: *Ne sutor ultra crepidam.*

COFFEE: Sharpens the wits. Only the kind that comes from Le Havre is good. At a fancy dinner, should be drunk standing up. Take it without sugar—very smart, and makes you look like you've lived in the Far East.

COGNAC: Very dangerous. Excellent for a variety of illnesses. A nice glass of cognac never did any harm. Taken on an empty stomach, kills intestinal worms.

COITUS, COPULATION: Words to be avoided. Say, "They had relations..."

COLD: Healthier than heat.

COLONIES (Our): Wax melancholic when the subject comes up.

COMB: Makes the hair fall out.

COMEDY: In verse, is no longer suited to our times. One should nonetheless respect high comedy. *Castigat ridendo mores.*

COMETS: Laugh at populations that were afraid of them.

COMFORT: Precious modern discovery.

COMMERCE: Debate which is nobler, commerce or industry.

COMMUNION: First Communion is the most beautiful day of one's life.

COMPASS: Having a good internal one helps you walk straight.

COMPETITION: The soul of commerce.

COMPOSITION: In school, is a proof of industriousness, as being good in Latin shows intelligence. But in the real world, one must make fun of those who were good at composition.

COMPOSURE: Looks well-bred, and besides it makes you seem English. Always preceded by "unflappable."

CONCERT: Perfectly respectable pastime.

CONCESSIONS: Never make any. They were Louis XVI's downfall.

CONCILIATION: Always preach it, even when the opposing sides are intractable.

CONCISION: A language no one speaks anymore.

CONCUPISCENCE: A priest's word to signify carnal desire.

CONFECTIONER: All the citizens of Rouen are confectioners.

CONGRATULATIONS: Always sincere, hearty, warm, etc.

CONSERVATIVE: Politician with a large belly. "Conservative with blinders on!" "Quite right, sir—these blinders are my guardrails."

CONSERVATORY: A subscription to the Conservatory is indispensable.

CONSPIRATOR: Conspirators always have a habit of putting their names on a list.

CONSTIPATION: Has an influence on political convictions. All men of letters are constipated.

CONTRALTO: We don't know what this is.

CONVERSATION: Politics and religion should be avoided.

CONVICTS: Always have sinister faces. All very capable with their hands. In prison, there are men of genius.

COOKING: In restaurants: always constipating. At home: always hearty. In the South: too spicy or oily.

COPAIBA BALSAM: Pretend not to know what it's for.

CORN (Foot): Predicts changes in weather better than a barometer. Removing one carelessly can be very dangerous: cite examples of horrible accidents.

CORSET: Prevents having children.

COSSACKS: Eat tallow.

COTTON: Is mainly useful for the ears.

COUNCILMEN (Town): Thunder against them apropos of street paving. "What are our councilmen *thinking of?*"

COUNTENANCE: A pleasing countenance is the surest passport.

COUNTERFEITERS: Always work in basements.

COUNTRY: Country folk are better than city folk. Envy them. In the country, everything is allowed—shoddy dress, pranks, etc.

COUSIN: Advise husbands to beware of the wife's cousin.

CRAYFISH: Walks backward. Always call reactionaries “crayfish.”  
 CREOLE: Spends his life in a hammock.  
 CRIMINAL: Always nefarious.  
 CRITIC: Always eminent. Is thought to know everything, be aware of everything, have read everything and seen everything. Call the ones you don’t like “Aristarchus” or “eunuch.”  
 CROCODILE: Imitates children’s wails to attract humans.  
 CROSSBOW: Excellent opportunity to bring up the story of William Tell.  
 CRUCIFIX: Looks good in an alcove and on the guillotine.  
 CRUSADES: Were a boon to Venetian commerce.  
 CUCKOLD: Every woman should make her husband a cuckold.  
 CUDGEL: More fearsome than the sword.  
 CUJAS: Inseparable from Barthole. No one knows what they wrote. Regardless: say to anyone studying law, “You’re too absorbed in Cujas and Barthole.”  
 CURACAO: The best is from Holland, because Curacao is in the Antilles.  
 CURL, CURLING: Not suitable for men.  
 CUSTOMS: One should rebel against it and defraud it (v. *taxes*).  
 CUT-RATE: Good name for a shop: inspires confidence.  
 CYPRESS: Grows only in cemeteries.  
 CZAR: Pronounce “tsar,” and occasionally “autocrat.”

## D

DAGUERREOTYPE: Will replace painting (v. *photography*).  
 DAMASCUS: The only place where they know how to make swords. Every good blade comes from Damascus.  
 DAMP: The cause of all illnesses.  
 DANCE: People no longer dance, they march.  
 DANCING GIRL: This phrase takes the imagination quite far. All Oriental women are dancing girls (v. *odalisque*).  
 DANTON: “We must dare, and dare again, and go on daring!”  
 DARWIN: The fellow who said we descended from apes.  
 DAY: The Gentleman has his days: for shaving, taking medicine, etc. The Lady has hers as well, which she calls “critical” at certain times of the month.  
 DEBAUCHERY: Cause of all illnesses in bachelors.  
 DECORATION *from the Legion of Honor*: Scoff at them, but covet them all the same. When you are awarded one, always say you didn’t ask for it.  
 DEFEAT: Is met with—and is so utter that no one is left to tell the tale.  
 DEFLOURATION (Right of): Do not believe it.  
 DEFRAUD: Defrauding the tax department is not cheating, but a proof of spirit and political independence.  
 DECIDE: Be outraged by, even though the crime is pretty rare.  
 DELIVERY (birth): Word to avoid; replace it with *event*. “When are you expecting the event?”  
 DEMOSTHENES: Never gave a speech without a pebble in his mouth.  
 DENTISTS: All liars. Use quack remedies. Are also taken for chiropodists. Call themselves surgeons the way opticians call themselves engineers.  
 DENTURES: Third set of teeth. Be careful not to swallow them in your sleep.  
 DEPUTY: To be elected one is the height of glory! Thunder against the Chamber of Deputies. Too many blowhards in the Chamber. They do nothing.  
 DERBY: A racing term. Very chic.  
 DESCARTES: “Cogito, ergo sum.”  
 DESERT: Dates come from there.  
 DESSERT: Virtuous individuals refuse it: “Oh, no! No pastry. I never eat dessert!”  
 DEVOTION: Complain that others are lacking in it. “In this regard, we can’t hold a candle to the dog!”  
 DIAMOND: They’ll end up manufacturing them—and to think they’re only coal. If you found one in its natural state, you wouldn’t bother to pick it up.  
 DIANA: Goddess of the chas(t)e.  
 DICTIONARY: Scoff at it—is only for ignoramuses. Rhyming dictionary: Use one? Disgraceful!  
 DIDEROT: Always followed by “and d’Alembert.”  
 DILETTANTE: Rich man, subscribes to the Opera.  
 DIMPLES: One should always tell a pretty girl that she has suitors nestled in her dimples.  
 DINNER: Once people dined at noon, but now they dine at impossible hours. What our forefathers called “dinner” is our lunch—and our lunch was their dinner. Dining that late is not called dinner, but “supper”!  
 DIOGENES: “I am looking for an honest man” “Stand out of my light.”  
 DIPLOMA: Sign of knowledge. Doesn’t prove a thing.  
 DIPLOMACY: A distinguished career, but fraught with difficulties and shrouded in mystery. Is suitable only for aristocrats. A difficult occupation to define, but above the common. A diplomat is always a shrewd observer of men.

**DIRECTORY (The):** The shame of those times! “In those days, honor had taken refuge in the armies.” In Paris, the women went about stark naked.

**DISSECTION:** An insult to the majesty of death.

**DIVA:** All female singers should be called “diva.”

**DIVORCE:** If Napoleon hadn’t divorced, he would still be on the throne.

**DIJNN:** Name of an Oriental dance.

**DOCTOR:** Always preceded by “the good.” In familiar conversation among men: “Oh, bullshit, doctor!” Is a miracle worker when he has your confidence, a jackass when you’ve fallen out. All doctors are materialists. “You can’t find the soul with a scalpel.”

**DOCTRINARIANS:** Despise them. Why? No idea.

**DOCUMENT:** Always of the utmost importance.

**DOG:** Especially created to save its master’s life. Man’s best friend.

**DOGE:** Married the sea. We know of only one: Marino Faliero.

**DOLMEN:** Has to do with the ancient French. Stone used for druid sacrifices. They exist only in Brittany. Nothing more is known about them.

**DOLPHIN:** Carries its young on its back.

**DOME:** Architectural tour de force. Be amazed that it can stay up by itself. Cite two, the one on the Invalides and the one on Saint Peter’s in Rome.

**DOMICILE:** Always inviolable. Despite this, the Courts and the Police enter whenever they please. Home, sweet home. I return to my lair.

**DOMINOS:** One’s game improves as one gets tipsier.

**DORMITORIES:** Always spacious and well ventilated. Better than bedrooms, for the students’ morals.

**DOUBT:** Worse than denial.

**DRAWING (Art of):** Is composed of three things: line, shading, and fine shading, as well as the finishing stroke, but only the master can provide the finishing stroke (Christophe).

**DRUNK:** Always preceded by “blind.”

**DUCKS:** All come from Rouen.

**DUEL:** Thunder against it. Is not a proof of courage. Prestige of the man who has fought a duel.

**DUNGEON:** Inspires morbid thoughts.

**DUPE:** Better to be a rogue than a dupe.

**DUPUYTREN:** Famous for his ointment and his museum.

**DUTIES:** Some people have them toward you, but you do not have any toward them.

**DWARF:** Tell the story of General Tom Thumb and, if you have shaken his hand, announce it with pride.

## E

**EARLY RISER:** To be one is a proof of morality. The man who goes to bed at 4 in the morning and gets up at 8 is lazy, but the man who goes to bed at 9 in the evening and goes out at 5 the next morning is active.

**EARTH:** Say “the four corners of the earth,” even though it’s round.

**ECHO:** Cite those of the Pantheon and the bridge at Neuilly.

**ECCLECTICISM:** Thunder against it, as being an immoral philosophy.

**ECONOMIC:** Always followed by “order.” Leads to fortune. Cite the story of Laffitte picking up a pin in the courtyard of the banker Perrégaux.

**ECONOMY (Political):** A science without guts.

**EDUCATION:** Let people believe that yours is extensive. Commoners don’t need any to earn a living.

**EGG:** Departure point for a philosophical disquisition on the genesis of living creatures.

**EGOTISM:** Complain of it in others and not notice one’s own.

**ELEPHANTS:** Are distinguished by their memory, and adore the sun.

**EMIR:** Said only when speaking of Abd El-Kader.

**EMPIRE:** “The Empire means peace” (Napoleon III).

**EMPRESSES:** All beautiful.

**ENAMEL:** Its secret has been lost.

**ENCYCLOPEDIA (The):** Laugh at it pityingly as an outdated work, and even thunder against it.

**ENGINEER:** The best career for a young man. Knows all the sciences.

**ENGLISHMEN:** All rich.

**ENGLISHWOMEN:** Be amazed that they have such lovely children.

**ENTHUSIASM:** Can only be inspired by the return of the Emperor’s ashes. Always impossible to describe, yet the newspaper devotes two full columns to it.

**EPACT, GOLDEN NUMBER, DOMINICAL LETTER:** On calendars. We do not know what these are.

**EPICURUS:** Despise him.

**EPISTOLARY:** A stylistic genre, reserved exclusively for women.

**ERA (ours):** Thunder against it. Complain that it isn’t poetic. Call it a period of transition or decadence.

**ERASER (Elastic):** Made from horse scrotum.

**ERECTION:** Said only with reference to monuments.

**EROSTRATUS:** To be brought up in any conversation about fires set during the Commune.

ERROR: “It’s worse than a crime, it’s an error” (Talleyrand). “There is no longer a single error left to commit” (Thiers). These two sentences must be articulated with profundity.

ERUDITION: Despise it as the mark of a narrow mind.

ESPLANADE: Is seen only at the Invalides.

ÉTAGERE: Indispensable in a pretty woman’s home.

ETIQUETTE: Confers prestige. Fires the imagination of the masses.

ETRUSCAN: All ancient vases are Etruscan.

ETYMOLOGY: Nothing could be easier, with some Latin and a little thought.

EUNUCH: Never has children. Fulminate against the castrati of the Sistine Chapel.

EVACUATIONS: Evacuations are often copious and always of a bad nature.

EVENING OUT *with the boys*: Requires oysters, white wine, and ribaldry.

EVENINGS: In the country they are spent morally.

EXASPERATION: Constantly at its limit.

EXCEPTION: Say that they prove the rule. Don’t venture to explain how.

EXECUTIONER: Office passed down from father to son.

EXECUTIONS (Capital): Complain about women who go to see them.

EXERCISE: Safeguards against all illnesses. Always recommend it.

EXHAUSTION: Always premature.

EXHIBITION: Topic of frenzied excitement in the 19th century.

EXPIRE: Used only with reference to newspaper subscriptions.

EXPUNGE: Used only with reference to poverty.

EXTIRPATE: Verb used only for heresies and foot corns.

## F

FACE: Mirror of the soul. In which case, some people’s souls are mighty ugly.

FACTORY: Dangerous to live near.

FAITHFUL: Inseparable from “friend” and “dog.” Never fail to quote these lines: “A faithful friend is a strong defense, and he that hath found such a one hath found a treasure,” etc.

FANFARE: Always loud.

FAREWELLS: Put a quiver in one’s voice when speaking of Fontainebleau’s farewells.

FARM: When visiting a farm, eat only whole grain bread and drink only milk. If you also have eggs, exclaim, “Goodness, they’re so fresh! No chance of finding any like these in town.”

FARMERS: Always taking it easy.

FASTING: At bottom, just a hygienic measure.

FAT: Fat people don’t need to learn to swim. Are the despair of executioners because they make the job so difficult. Example: Mme. Du Barry.

FATALITY: Exclusively romantic word.

FAVOR: One is doing children a favor by spanking them; animals, by beating them; servants, by firing them; criminals, by punishing them.

FEAR: Gives one wings.

FELICITY: Always perfect. If your housekeeper is named Felicity, then she is perfect.

FEMALE: Unlike humans, female animals are less attractive than the males. E.g., pheasant, rooster, lion, etc.

FENCING: Fencing instructors know secret thrusts.

FETUS: Any anatomical part preserved in wine spirits.

FEUDALISM: Without any clear idea of what it is, thunder against it.

FEVER: Proof of vigorous blood. Is caused by prunes, melon, April sun, etc.

FEZ: Indispensable to the man of letters. Lends dignity to the face.

FIG LEAF: Emblem of virility in sculpture.

FIGARO (The Marriage of): Yet another cause of the Revolution!

FINGER: God pokes his fingers everywhere.

FINGER BOWL: Sign of wealth in a household.

FIRE: Purifies everything. When you hear someone shout “Fire!” the first thing to do is lose your wits.

FIRING SQUAD: Nobler than the guillotine. Joy of the individual who is granted this favor.

FIST: To rule France, one must have an iron fist.

FLAG (National): Seeing it makes the heart beat faster.

FLAGRANTE DELICTO: Use in Latin. Is applied only to cases of adultery.

FLAMINGO: Bird, so named because it is Flemish.

FLATTERER: Never miss an occasion to quote, “’Tis hard to find a man of great estate, that can distinguish flatterers from friends.” Or else, “Every flatterer lives at the expense of him who listens to him.”

FLIES: *Puer abige muscas*.

FLOOD VICTIMS: Always along the Loire.

FOOD: Always hearty and plentiful in boarding schools.

FOREHEAD: High and bald is an indicator of genius.

FOREIGN: Fascination with everything that comes from abroad is proof of a liberal mind. Denigration of anything that isn't French is proof of patriotism.

FORK: Should always be made of silver: it's less dangerous. Use it with the left hand, which is more comfortable and more distinguished.

FORNARINA: She was a beautiful woman. That's all you need to know about her.

FORTUNE: *Audaces fortuna juvat*. The rich are lucky, they have fortunes! When someone speaks to you of a great fortune, never fail to say, "Yes, but is it quite secure?"

FOSSIL: Proof of the Flood. Tasteful witticism, when applied to an academician.

FOUNDATION: News items are always lacking any.

FRANCOPHOBIE: Use this term when speaking of German columnists.

FREE TRADE: The bane of commerce.

FREEDOM: O freedom! How many crimes have been committed in thy name! We have all the ones we need. Freedom is not license (conservative's phrase).

FREEMASONRY: Yet another cause of the Revolution! The initiation rites are terrible—some have died from them. Cause of arguments in households. The clergy holds it in poor esteem. Whatever could their secret be?

FRENCH: The best people in the universe. "There is simply one more Frenchman," said the Count d'Artois. How proud one feels to be French when one gazes on the Vendome column!

FRENCH FURY: Always say "*furia francese*."

FRESCO: No one makes them anymore.

FRICASSEE: Only prepared well in the country. Rabbit fricassee is always made with cat.

FROG: Lives inside rocks.

FRONTISPIECE: Great men look good on them.

FUGUE: We don't know quite what they are, but the fact is that they're very difficult, and very boring.

FULMINATE: Pretty verb.

FUNCTIONARY: Inspires respect, whatever function he fills.

FUNDAMENTS OF SOCIETY: I.e., property, family, religion, respect for authority. Defend them angrily if they're attacked.

FUNDS (Secret): Incalculable sums with which ministers buy consciences. Wax indignant over.

FUNERAL: About the deceased: "And to think that we dined together no more than a week ago!" Called "obsequies" for a general, "entombment" for a philosopher.

FUR: Sign of wealth.

FURNITURE: Have every fear for one's furniture.

FURUNCLE: *V. pimples*.

## G

GAMBLING: Rail against this fatal passion.

GAME (meat): Is good only when slightly off.

GARDENS (English): More natural than French gardens.

GARLIC: Kills intestinal worms and leaves one ready for bouts of love. They rubbed Henry IV's lips with it as he came into the world.

GARRET: A wonderful place to be when one is twenty!

GARTER: Must always be worn above the knee for women of high society, below for women of the people. A woman should never neglect this vestimentary detail—there are so many brazen individuals in the world.

GENERAL: Is always brave. Usually holds a profession unrelated to his rank, such as ambassador, town councilman, or head of government.

GENERATION (Spontaneous): A socialistic idea.

GENIUS: Useless to admire it, it's "a neurosis"!

GENTLEMAN: There aren't any left.

GEOMETRY: "Let no one unversed in geometry enter here."

GERMANS: A nation of dreamers [*Obs.*]. But what military organization! No wonder they beat us, we weren't ready!

GIAOUR: Fierce expression of unknown meaning, but it has something to do with the Orient.

GIBBERISH: A foreigner's way of speaking. Always laugh at a foreigner who speaks your language poorly.

GIFT: It's not the value that determines its worth, or else it's not the worth that determines its value. The gift is unimportant, it's the thought that counts.

GIRAFFE: A polite word so as not to call a woman a cow.

GIROINDINS: To pity more than to blame.

GLOBE: Modest word to designate a woman's breasts. "Permit me to kiss your adorable globes."

GLORIA: A *Gloria* must always be accompanied by its *consolation*.

GLORY: Is but a wisp of smoke.

GLOVES: Give one that proper look.

GOBELINS TAPESTRY: Remarkable piece of work, takes fifty years to complete. When seeing one, exclaim, "It's more beautiful than painting! The craftsman has no idea what he's done!"

GOD: Voltaire himself said, "If God didn't exist, we would have to invent him."



GODDAM: "The essence of the English language," said Beaumarchais. Snicker patronizingly.

GODFATHER: Always the godchild's true father.

GOG: Always followed by Magog.

GOLDSMITH: Always call him Mr. Josse.

GOSPELS: Divine, sublime books, etc.

GOTHIC: Architectural style that suits religion better than the others.

GOURMET: Always preceded by "fine."

GOVERNESSES: Are all from excellent families that have fallen on hard times. Dangerous in households, seduce the husband.

GRAMMAR: Teach it to children from their earliest years as being something clear and easy.

GRAMMARIANS: All pedants.

GRATITUDE: Doesn't need to be expressed.

GREEK: Anything unintelligible.

GREETINGS: Always cordial.

GRISSETTES: There aren't any left. This should be said with the downcast air of a hunter complaining that there is no more game.

GROG: Not socially acceptable.

GROTTOES WITH STALACTITES: A famous celebration (ball or banquet) was held inside one, given by a prominent figure. One sees things "that look like organ pipes." Mass was said in them during the Revolution.

GROUPING: Appropriate for mantelpieces and politics.

GUARD: The guard shall not lay down its arms! Eight words to replace five letters.

GUERRILLA: Does more damage to the enemy than the regular army.

GUESTS: To be held up as examples for your children.

GULF STREAM: Famous, recently discovered city in Norway.

GUNFIRE: The only way to shut Parisians up.

GYMNASIUM: Branch of the Comédie Française.

GYMNASTICS: One can never do enough. Wears children out.

## H

HABIT: The ones acquired while a student are generally bad.

HACK: Journalist. When one adds "lowlife," it's the pits of disdain.

HAIDUK: Confuse it with eunuch.

HALBERD: In Switzerland, all the men carry halberds.

HAM: Always from Mayence. Beware of it, because of trichina.

HAMLET: Touching noun. Works well in poetry.

HAMMOCK: Suitable for Creoles. Indispensable in a garden. Convince oneself that it is more comfortable than a bed.

HAND: To have a fine hand means to write well.

HANDKERCHIEF: It is socially correct to blow your nose in one.

HANDWRITING: Fine handwriting opens every door. When indecipherable: indicator of science, such as doctors' prescriptions.

HARD: Invariably add "as iron." One can also say "hard as a rock," but it's less energetic.

HARE: Sleeps with its eyes open.

HAREM: Always compare a rooster among hens to a sultan in his harem. Every schoolboy's dream.

HARP: Produces celestial harmonies. In engravings, is played only on ruins or at the edge of a waterfall. Shows off the arm and hand to advantage.

HASHISH: Not to be confused with beef hash, which produces no voluptuous sensation whatsoever.

HAT: Complain about the shape of.

HEALTH: Too much health is a cause of illness.

HEAT: Always unbearable! Never drink when it's hot out.

HEMICYCLE: Know of none except the one at the Beaux-Arts.

HEMORRHOIDS: Come from sitting on stoves and stone benches. Saint Fiacre's Disease. Hemorrhoids are a sign of good health, therefore one must not drain them.

HENRY III, HENRY IV: Apropos these kings, never fail to say, "All the Henrys were unfortunate."

HERCULES: Name for any strong man. Always come from the North.

HERMAPHRODITE: Arouses unwholesome curiosity. Try to see one.

HERNIA: Everybody has one without knowing it.

HERRING: The wealth of Holland.

HIATUS: Do not tolerate it.

HICCUPS: The cure is a clap on the back or a sudden fright.

HIEROGLYPHICS: Ancient language of the Egyptians, invented by priests to conceal their guilty secrets. And to think there are people who understand them! When all is said and done, they might be just a hoax.

HIPPOCRATES: One should always quote him in Latin, because he wrote in Greek, except in this phrase: "Hippocrates says yes, but Galen says no."

HIPPOLYTUS: The death of Hippolytus is the most beautiful recital passage that can be assigned. Everyone should learn it by heart.

HOMER: Never existed. Famous for his way of laughing.

HOMO: Say “Ecce homo!” when the person one is expecting enters.

HONOR: When speaking of it, quote this phrase: “Honor is like a steep, smooth embankment;/Once fallen one cannot climb back up.”  
Always care deeply about one’s own, and not a whit about that of others.

HORIZONS: Find natural ones beautiful and political ones somber.

HORN (Hunting): Makes a good effect in the woods, and on water in the evening.

HORROR: “Horrors!” with regard to lewd expressions. One can do these things, but not say them. “It was in the horror of blackest night.”

HORSE: If it knew its own strength, would not let itself be treated that way. Horse meat: a good pamphlet topic for a man looking to be taken seriously. Race horse: despise it! What good does it serve?

HORSEBACK RIDING: Good exercise for losing weight. Example: all cavalry soldiers are thin. Good exercise for gaining weight. Example: all cavalry officers are potbellied.

HOSPITALITY: Must always be Scottish. Quote these verses: “In Scotland, hospitality when sought/May be given but never bought.”

HOSPODAR: Works well in a sentence about “Oriental matters.”

HOSTILITIES: Hostilities are like oysters, they have to be “opened.” It seems all that’s left is to sit at table.

HOTELS: Are good only in Switzerland.

HOUSEHOLD: Always speak of it with respect.

HUGO (Victor): Was wrong to get involved in politics.

HUNCHBACKS: Are very witty. Much sought after by lustful women.

HUNT: Excellent sport that one should affect to adore. Part of the pomp of Sovereigns. Sends magistrates into raptures.

HUSSAR: Pronounce “hu-zar.” Always preceded by “gallant” or “dashing.” Appeals to the ladies. Never fail to quote, “She espied her young gallant Hussar...”

HYDRA *of anarchy, socialism, or any other system that frightens people*: Try to conquer it.

HYDROTHERAPY: Cure and cause of every illness.

HYGIENE: Must always be maintained. Prevents illnesses, except when it causes them.

HYPNOTISM: Excellent topic of conversation, and helps you meet women.

HYPOTHESIS: Often risky, always bold.

HYSTERIA: Confuse it with nymphomania.

## I

ICE CREAM: Eating it is dangerous.

ICE CREAM MAKERS: All Neapolitan.

IDEAL: Utterly useless.

IDEOLOGUES: All journalists are.

IDOLATERS: Are cannibals.

ILIAD: Always followed by *Odyssey*.

ILLEGIBLE: What a doctor’s prescription should be. Same for signatures: this shows that one is inundated with correspondence.

ILLUSIONS: Claim to have many. Lament having lost them.

IMAGES: Poetry always contains too many of them.

IMAGINATION: Always vivid. Guard against it. When one has none, denigrate it in others. To write novels, all you need is a little imagination.

IMBECILES: Those who don’t think like you.

IMMIGRANTS: Earn their living by giving guitar lessons and making salad.

IMMORALITY: When said well, this word enhances the person using it.

IMPERIALISTS: All honest, refined, peaceful, distinguished.

IMPIETY: Thunder against it.

IMPORTS: A perpetual drain on trade.

IMPRESARIO: Artist’s word that means director. Always preceded by “able.”

INAUGURATION: Cause for joy.

INCAPACITY: Always notorious. The more incapable one is, the more ambitious one must be.

INCOGNITO: The guise in which princes travel.

INCRUSTATION: Said only with reference to mother-of-pearl.

INDOLENCE: The result of warm climates.

INDUSTRY: V. *commerce*.

INFANTICIDE: Only committed among the common folk.

INFINITESIMAL: No one knows what it is, but it’s related to homeopathy.

INFORMANTS: Always with the police.

INKWELL: Is given as a gift to doctors.

INNATE IDEAS: Scoff at them.

INNOCENCE: Impassiveness proves it.

INNOVATION: Always dangerous.

INQUISITION: Its crimes have been greatly exaggerated.

INSCRIPTION: Always cuneiform.

INSPIRATION (Poetic): Things that provoke it: the sight of the ocean, love, women, etc.

INSTINCT: Makes up for intelligence.  
 INSTITUTE (French): The members of the French Institute are all old men who wear green taffeta eyeshades.  
 INSTRUMENT: The instruments used to commit a crime are always blunt, unless they're sharp.  
 INSULT: Must always be washed away with blood.  
 INSURRECTION: "Man's most sacred duty" (Blanqui).  
 INTEGRITY: Especially characteristic of magistrates.  
 INTERMISSION: Always too long.  
 INTOXICATION: Always preceded by "mad."  
 INTRIGUE: The doorway to anything.  
 INTRODUCTION: Obscene word.  
 INVASION: Leaves people in tears.  
 INVENTORS: All die in the poorhouse—and someone else profits from their discovery, which isn't fair.  
 INVOICE: Always too high.  
 ITALIANS: All musical. All treacherous.  
 ITALY: Should be seen immediately after marriage. Gives rise to much disappointment, is not as beautiful as they say.  
 IVORY: Used only with regard to teeth.

## J

JANSENISM: We don't know what it is, but it's very fashionable to talk about.  
 JAPAN: Everything there is made of porcelain.  
 JASPER: All vases in museums are made of jasper.  
 JAVELIN: Just as useful as a rifle, if one knows how to use it.  
 JEALOUSY: Always preceded by "mad." Terrible passion. A knit brow is a proof of jealousy.  
 JESUITS: Have a hand in every revolution. We don't suspect how many there are. Never speak of "the battle of Jesuits."  
 JEW: Son of Israel. All Jews are spyglass merchants.  
 JOCKEY: Deplore the race of jockeys.  
 JOCKEY CLUB: The members are all very rich and jovial young men (q.v.). Calling it simply "the Jockey" is very chic and makes you look like you belong.  
 JOHN BULL: When one doesn't know an Englishman's name, call him John Bull.  
 JOY: The mother of fun and games. One should never mention her house.  
 JUDGESHIP: Fine career for marrying upward. All judges are pederasts.  
 JUJUBE: No one knows what it's made of.  
 JUNE BUG: Children of springtime. Fine subject for a pamphlet. Their eradication is every mayor's dream. When speaking of the ravages they cause in a speech at agricultural fairs, one should tar them as "insidious pests."  
 JURY: Avoid being on one at all costs.  
 JUSTICE: Never concern yourself with it.

## K

KALEIDOSCOPE: Used only with regard to painting exhibits.  
 KEEPSAKE: Should be found on a living room coffee table.  
 KIOSK: Place in a park where delights are found.  
 KISS: Saying "embrace" is more decent. Tenderly stolen. A kiss should be "bestowed": on the forehead of a young girl, the cheek of a married lady, the hand of a belle, the neck of a child, and the lips of a mistress.  
 KNIFE: Is Catalan when the blade is long. Is called a dagger when used to commit a crime.  
 KNOT (Gordian): Has some relation to Antiquity. (The Ancients' way of knotting their neckties.)  
 KNOUT: Word that offends Russians.  
 KORAN: A book mostly about women, by Mohammed.

## L

LABORATORY: You need one in the country.  
 LABORERS: Where would we be without them?  
 LACKEY: Grave insult, in grand style, to be used against a political adversary: "Sir, you are but a lackey of the Palace cliques!" Must be delivered from the rostrum of the Chamber.  
 LACUSTRINE CITIES: Deny their existence, since no one can live underwater.  
 LADY: Always first. "God bless them." In some cases, the term should not be used.  
 LA FAYETTE: General famous for his white horse.  
 LA FONTAINE: Maintain that you have never read his tales. Call him "The Immortal Fabulist."  
 LAGOON: City on the Adriatic.  
 LAKE: Have female company when rowing on one.  
 LANCET: Always keep one in your pocket, but be afraid to use it.

LANDLORD: Human beings are divided into two great classes: landlords and tenants.

LANDSCAPES (Painted): Always look like a mess of spinach.

LANGUAGES (Living): The misfortunes of France stem from the fact that we don't know enough of them.

LATE (*adj.*): "My late father," and raise your hat.

LATIN: Man's natural language. Spoils writing. Is useful only for reading the inscriptions on public fountains. Beware of Latin quotations, they always contain something risqué.

LAUGHTER: Always Homeric.

LAURELS: Keep one from resting.

LAW (The): No one knows what it is. Is killing us. With it, no government is possible.

LAWYERS: Too many of them in the Chamber of Deputies. Have faulty judgment. Say of a lawyer who is not well-spoken: "Yes, but he really knows his subject!"

LEAGUE: You can travel a league faster than you can travel three miles.

LEARNED (person): Make fun of him. All it takes to be learned is memory and hard work.

LEATHER: All leather comes from Russia.

LEFT-HANDERS: Formidable fencers. More adroit than right-handers.

LETHARGY: Some recorded cases have lasted for years.

LIBRARY: Always have one at home, especially when living in the country.

LICENTIOUSNESS: Seen only in big cities.

LIGHT: Always say, *Fiat lux!* when someone lights a candle.

LIGUE (political party): Precursor of liberalism in France.

LILAC: Gives pleasure because is a harbinger of summer.

LION: Is generous. Always plays with a ball. Roar, lion, roar! And to think that the lion and the tiger are just cats!

LITERATURE: The occupation of idle people.

LITTRÉ: Snicker when hearing his name. "The fellow who says we're descended from apes!"

LORD: Rich Englishman.

LOUIS XVI: Always say, "That unfortunate monarch..."

LOVELY: Used for anything pleasing. "How very lovely!" is the height of admiration.

LUCKY: When speaking of a lucky man: "He was born with his cap on." We don't know what this means, and the listener won't either.

LUXURY: The downfall of States.

LYNX: Animal famous for its eye.

## M

MACARONI: Should be served with the hands when it is Italian-style.

MACHIAVELLI: Do not read him, but label him a scoundrel.

MACHIAVELLIANISM: Word to be pronounced with a shudder.

MACKINTOSH: Scottish philosopher. The inventor of rubber.

MAESTRO: Italian word meaning pianist.

MAGIC: Scoff at it.

MAIDEN: Used only for Joan of Arc, and with "of Orléans."

MAIDS: All bad. Good help is hard to find these days!

MAJOR: Now found only at captain's tables.

MAKEUP: Ruins the skin.

MALEDICTION: Always pronounced by a father.

MALTHUS: Do not read him, but label him a scoundrel: "the unspeakable Malthus."

MAMLUKS: Ancient people of the Orient (Egypt).

MANDOLIN: Indispensable for seducing Spanish women.

MARBLE: All statues are made of Paros marble.

MARSEILLES: Its residents are all witty.

MARTYRS: All the early Christians were.

MASK: Confers wit.

MATERIALISM: Pronounce this word with horror in one's voice, stressing every syllable.

MATHEMATICS: Dry out the heart.

MATTRESS: The harder it is, the better for you.

MAXIM: Never new but always comforting.

MAYOR (Town): Always ridiculous. Feels insulted when referred to as "alderman."

MECHANICS: The inferior part of mathematics.

MEDALLION: They made them in Antiquity.

MEDICAL STUDENTS: Sleep near corpses. Some even eat them.

MEDICINE: Scoff at it when one is feeling fit.

MEERSCHAUM: Is found in the earth. Pipes are made of it.

MELANCHOLY: Sign of a distinguished heart and an elevated mind.

MELODRAMAS: Less immoral than dramas.

MELON: Good topic of table discussion: “Is it a vegetable or a fruit?” English people eat it for dessert, which is remarkable.

MEMORY: Complain about your own, and even brag about not having any. But protest strenuously if someone should question your sense of judgment.

MEPHISTOPHELEAN: Should be said of any bitter laugh.

MERCURY: Kills the illness along with the patient.

METALLURGY: Very fashionable.

METAMORPHOSIS: Laugh about the time when they believed in it. Ovid is its inventor.

METAPHORS: There are always too many of them in an author’s style.

METAPHYSICS: Laughing at it is proof of a superior mind.

METHOD: Serves no purpose.

MEXICO: “The Mexican expedition is the reign’s greatest idea” (Rouher).

MIDNIGHT: Time limit for gaiety and decent pleasures; anything done past this hour is immoral.

MIGHT: Always Herculean. “Might makes right” (Bismarck).

MILK: Dissolves oysters. Attracts snakes. Whitens skin. Parisian women bathe in it every morning.

MIND: Always preceded by “agile.” Great minds think alike.

MINISTER: Bottom rung of human achievement.

MINUTE: People have no idea how long a minute can be.

MISSIONARIES: Are all eaten or crucified.

MISSIVE: Nobler than “letter.”

MOB: Always has sound instincts. *Turba ruit or ruunt*. “The vile multitude” (Thiers). “The mob is the mother of tyrants,” etc.

MODELING: Say about any statue one is looking at, “The modeling is quite good.”

MODESTY: A woman’s most beautiful adornment.

MOLE: Blind as a mole. And yet, it has eyes.

MONARCHY: The constitutional monarchy is the best of all republics.

MONEY: The root of all evil. *Auri sacra fames*. The modern god (not to be confused with Apollo). Ministers call it a remuneration, notaries a fee, doctors an honorarium, employees a compensation, workers a salary, and domestics wages. It can’t buy happiness.

MONK: Follower of Onan.

MONOPOLY: Thunder against it.

MONSTERS: No one sees them anymore.

MOON: Inspires melancholy. Could it be inhabited?

MORTGAGE: Demand “reforms to the mortgage system”—very chic.

MOSAIC: Its secret is lost.

MOSQUITO: More dangerous than any wild beast.

MOUNTEBANK: Always preceded by “cheap.”

MUSCLES: The muscles of strong men are always like steel.

MUSEUM: Versailles: traces the highlights of our national glory; an excellent idea of King Louis-Philippe’s. The Louvre: young ladies should avoid it. Dupuytren: a good thing to show young men.

MUSHROOMS: Eat only ones that come from the market.

MUSIC: Reminds one of many things. Soothes the savage breast. Example: “The Marseillaise.”

MUSICIAN: A true musician composes no music, plays no instrument, and despises virtuosos.

MUSSELS: Always give you indigestion.

MUSTACHE: Gives one a martial look.

MUSTARD: The only good mustard is from Dijon. Ruins the stomach.

## N

NAPLES: When speaking with someone learned, say Parthenope. See Naples and die! (v. *Yvetot*).

NATURE: Ah, the delights of nature! Say this every time you find yourself in the country.

NAVIGATOR: Always hardy.

NECTAR: Confuse it with ambrosia.

NEGRESSES: Warmer than white women (v. *blondes* and *brunettes*).

NEGROES: Be amazed that their saliva is white—and that they can speak French.

NEIGHBORS: Try to have them do favors for you without it costing you anything.

NEOLOGISM: The downfall of the French language.

NERVES: Said whenever one doesn’t understand an illness; this explanation satisfies the listener.

NEWSPAPERS: One cannot do without them but should thunder against. Their importance in modern society. Leave copies of the serious papers lying around the living room, making sure to rumple the pages first. Marking a few passages with a red pencil also produces a highly favorable effect. In the morning, read an article in one of these serious and weighty periodicals; and in the evening, when in company, cleverly lead the conversation around to the article’s topic in order to shine.

NIGHTMARE: Comes from the stomach.

NORMANS: Think that they have a funny accent, and tease them about their cotton bonnets.

NOSTRILS: If upturned, a sign of lechery.

NOTARIES: At this point, don't trust them.

NOVELS: Pervert the masses. Are less immoral in serial form than in volumes. Only historical novels can be tolerated, because at least they teach history. Some novels are written with the point of a scalpel; others rest on the tip of a needle.

NUMISMATICS: Related to the high sciences. Inspires immense respect.

## O

OASIS: Inn of the desert.

OBSCENITY: All scientific words derived from Greek or Latin conceal an obscenity.

OBVIOUS: Always blindingly, unless it's plain for all to see.

OCTOGENARIAN: Term for any old person.

ODALISQUE: All Oriental women are odalisques (v. *dancing girl*).

ODEON: Joke about its remoteness.

ODOR (Foot): Sign of good health.

OFFENBACH: The moment one hears his name, one must cross two fingers to ward off the evil eye. Very Parisian—looks smart.

OLD PERSON: Concerning a flood, storm, etc., old people in the countryside can never remember seeing one like it.

OLIVE OIL: Is never good. You need to have a friend in Marseilles who can send you a little barrel.

OMEGA: Second letter of the Greek alphabet, since people always say "the alpha and the omega."

OMNIBUS: One never finds a seat in it. Was invented by Louis XIV. "I, sir, have seen tricycles that had but three wheels!"

OPTIMIST: Synonym for imbecile.

ORATION: Any speech by Bossuet.

ORCHESTRA: Image of society: everyone plays a part and there's a leader.

ORCHITIS: Gentleman's ailment.

ORDER: How many crimes are committed in thy name! (v. *freedom*).

ORGAN: Elevates the soul toward God.

ORIENTALIST: Man who has traveled extensively.

ORIGINAL: Scoff at anything original, hate it, reject it, exterminate it if possible.

OSTRICH: Digests stones.

OTTER: Used to make caps and vests.

OUTSKIRTS (of city): Terrible in times of revolution.

OYSTERS: No longer eaten. They're too expensive!

## P

PAGANINI: Never tuned his violin. Famous for the length of his fingers.

PAIN: Always has a favorable outcome. Real pain is always held in check.

PAINTING ON GLASS: The secret is lost.

PALFREY: White animal of the Middle Ages, now extinct.

PALLADIUM: Ancient fortress.

PALM TREE: Adds local color.

PALMYRA: Queen of Egypt? Ruins? Who knows?

PAMPHLETEERING: No one does this anymore.

PANHANDLING: Should be banned and never is.

PANTHEISM: Thunder against it: absurd.

PARADE: Always cite the Thermopylae. Parades in the Vosges are the Thermopylae of France (said frequently in 1870).

PARADOX: Always said on Boulevard des Italiens, between two puffs of a cigarette.

PARALLEL (historical): One should choose only from among the following: Caesar and Pompeius, Horace and Virgil, Voltaire and Rousseau, Napoleon and Charlemagne, Goethe and Schiller, Bayard and MacMahon...

PARIS: The great prostitute. Heaven for women, hell for horses.

PARTHIAN SHOT: Wax indignant at, though it is perfectly admissible.

PARTS: Are shameful for some, natural for others.

PATIENT: To make a patient feel better, laugh at his illness and deny his suffering.

PEDANTRY: Must be ridiculed, except when applied to superficial matters.

PEDERASTY: Illness that afflicts all men at a certain age.

PELICAN: Pierces its own flanks to feed its young. Emblem of the good father.

PEOPLE: One's enemies. The cause of one's ruin.

PERIOD (of revolutions): Always ongoing, since each new government promises to end it.

PERSPIRATION (Foot): Sign of good health.

PERU: Land where everything is made of gold.

PHAETHON: Inventor of the vehicles that bear his name.

PHEASANT: Very chic in a dinner.

PHILIPPE ÉGALITÉ: Yet another cause of the Revolution. Committed every crime of that nefarious period.

PHILOSOPHY: One should always snicker at it.

PHOENIX: Perfect name for an accident insurance company.  
 PHOTOGRAPHY: Will dethrone painting (v. *daguerreotype*).  
 PIANO: Indispensable in a salon.  
 PIDGIN: One must always speak pidgin to be understood by a foreigner, no matter what his nationality. Also used in telegraphy.  
 PIG: Since the inside of its body is “just like a man’s,” one should use them in hospitals to teach anatomy.  
 PIGEON: Should only be eaten with peas.  
 PILLOW: Never use one, it makes you hunchbacked.  
 PIMPLES: On the face or elsewhere, a sign of good health and circulation. Never drain them.  
 PINCE-NEZ: Haughty and distinguished.  
 PIPE: Not socially appropriate, except at the seashore.  
 PITY: Always guard against it.  
 PLANETS: Were all discovered by Leverrier.  
 PLANT: Always cures the part of the body that it resembles.  
 PLEASURE: Obscene word.  
 PLICA POLONICA: If you cut your hair, it bleeds.  
 POACHERS: All ex-convicts. Responsible for every crime committed in the countryside. Should arouse unreasoning fury. “No, sir, no pity!”  
 POCKMARKED: Pockmarked women are all lascivious.  
 POET: Synonym for dreamer and ninny.  
 POETRY: Is utterly useless. Out of fashion.  
 POLICE: Always in the wrong.  
 POLICEMAN: Society’s first line of defense. Say “law enforcement” or “constabulary.”  
 POLISHING: If you want it done right, do it yourself.  
 PONSARD: The only poet who had good sense.  
 POOR (The): Caring for them makes up for every other virtue.  
 POPILIUS: Invented a kind of circle.  
 PORK BUTCHER: Stories of paté made with human flesh. All pork butchers have pretty wives.  
 PORTFOLIO: Carrying one under your arm makes you look like a minister.  
 PORTLINESS: Sign of wealth and sloth.  
 POULTICE: Must always be applied while waiting for the doctor to come.  
 PRACTICE: Makes perfect. Better than theory. With practice, one can learn to play the violin like Paganini.  
 PRADON: Never forgive him for having been Racine’s rival.  
 PRAGMATIC SANCTION: We don’t know what this is.  
 PRANK: Must be played when one is on a country outing with the ladies.  
 PREOCCUPATION: Is all the deeper if one’s absorption causes one to stand still.  
 PRIAPISM: Ancient cult.  
 PRIESTS: Should be castrated. Sleep with their maids, and have children that they call their “nephews.” All the same, there are good ones.  
 PRINCIPLES: Always debatable. One can never tell their nature or their number. No matter, are sacred.  
 PRINTED: One should believe everything that is printed. Seeing one’s name in print! There are people who commit crimes solely for that reason.  
 PRINTING PRESS: A marvelous discovery. Has done more harm than good.  
 PROFESSOR: Always learned.  
 PROGRESS: Always misunderstood and too hasty.  
 PROPAGANDA TRACTS: Despise them. No need to know a single one.  
 PROPELLER: The future of mechanics.  
 PROPERTY: One of the fundaments of society. More sacred than religion.  
 PROSE: Easier to write than verse.  
 PROSTITUTE: A necessary evil. Keeps our daughters and sisters safe, so long as there are bachelors around. Should be chased away without pity. One can no longer go out with one’s wife because there are so many of them on the boulevard. Are always girls from poor families corrupted by rich bourgeois.  
 PROVIDENCE: What would we do without it?  
 PRUNES: Keep the stomach unencumbered.  
 PUNCH: Suitable for a boys’ night out. Makes people delirious. Turn out the lights when setting a match to it—the flame is fantastic!  
 PURPLE: Nobler word than “red.”  
 PYRAMID: Pointless labor.

## Q

QUESTION: To ask it is to answer it.

## R

RACINE: Naughty!

RADICALISM: All the more dangerous for being latent. The Republic encourages us toward radicalism.

RAFT: Always “of the Medusa.”

RAGE: Stirs up the blood. Hygienic to fly into one now and then.

RAILROAD: If Napoleon had had them, he would have been invincible! Be ecstatic about the invention and say, “Sir, as surely as I’m standing here, I was in X this morning, I took the train for Y, did what I had to do, and was back by Z o’clock!”

RAILROAD STATIONS: Become ecstatic at and offer them as a models of architecture.

RAINCOAT: Very advantageous as outerwear. Harmful because it blocks perspiration.

RATTAN: A walking stick should be made of it.

REDHEADS: *V. blondes, brunettes, and Negresses.*

REFERENCES: Guarantee for families and parents. Are always favorable.

RELATIVES: Always a nuisance. Keep the poor ones out of sight.

RELIGION: A fundament of society. Necessary for the common folk, to a point. “The religion of our ancestors,” should be said unctuously.

REPUBLICAN: Republicans are not all thieves, but all thieves are republicans.

RESTAURANT: Always order dishes that you wouldn’t normally eat at home. When at a loss, choose what your neighbor is having.

REVERIE: Lofty thought that no one understands.

RHYME: Never in tune with reason.

RIFLE: In the country, always keep one handy.

RING: It is very distinguished to wear one on your index finger. Wearing it on your thumb is too Oriental. Wearing rings deforms the fingers.

ROBE (official): Inspires respect.

ROMANCES: Singers of romances appeal to the ladies.

RONSAUD: Ridiculous, with his Greek and Latin words.

ROOSTER: A thin man should always say that the finest roosters are never fat.

ROUSSEAU: Believe that Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Jean-Baptiste Rousseau were brothers, like the two Corneilles.

RUINS: Induce reveries and make a landscape look poetic.

## S

SACRILEGE: It’s sacrilege to cut down a tree.

SAFES: Their combinations are very easy to crack.

SAINT BARTHOLOMEW’S DAY: Old wives’ tale.

SAINT HELENA: Island known for its boulder.

SAINTE-BEUVE: On Good Friday, ate only pork products.

SALE: Selling and buying, the aim of life.

SALON: Frequenting one at the start of a literary career sets a fellow up nicely.

SALT SHAKER: Knocking one over brings bad luck.

SAPPIC AND ADONIC (verse): Produces an excellent effect in a literary article.

SATRAP: Rich and debauched man.

SATURNALIA: Celebrations under the Directory.

SAUSAGE: Sign of domestic happiness. Indispensable at Christmas dinner!

SAVINGS BOX: Opportunity for the servants to steal.

SCAFFOLD: When mounting it, be sure to utter several eloquent phrases before dying.

SCARF: Looks poetic.

SCHOOL (Public): Nobler than private school.

SCHOOLS: Polytechnic Institute: every mother’s dream for her son [*Obs.*]. Terror of the bourgeois caught in a demonstration when he realizes the Polytechnic has sided with the workers [*Obs.*]. Calling it “the Poly” makes it look like you went there. Saint-Cyr military academy: young men from aristocratic families. The medical school: all fanatics. The law school: young men of good family.

SCIENCE: A little science leads you away from religion, a lot of it brings you back.

SCUDÉRY: Scoff at the name, without knowing if it belonged to a man or a woman.

SCURF: Sign of good health (*v. pimples*).

SEA: Is bottomless. Image of the infinite. Confers great thoughts. One should always have a telescope when at the seashore. When contemplating the sea, always murmur, “So much water! So much water!”

SEALED: Always preceded by “hermetically.”

SEASICKNESS: To avoid feeling it, simply think about something else.

SEAT: Always ask for one.

SECRETION: Be pleased when it comes out, and amazed that the human body can produce so much of it.

SENECA: Wrote at a golden desk.

SERFS: Example to show one’s son, if anyone knew where to find them.

SERIAL NOVELS: Cause of demoralization. Argue about the probable outcome. Write to the author to suggest ideas. Fury at finding a character with your name.



SEVILLE: Famous for its barber. See Seville and die! (v. *Naples*).

SHEETS: All sheets come from Elbeuf.

SHELL: Useful for making pendulums and inkwells.

SHEPHERDS: All sorcerers. Their specialty is conversing with the Holy Virgin.

SIGH: Should be let out in a woman's presence.

SIGNATURE: The more complicated the flourishes, the more beautiful the signature.

SINGER: Eats a fresh egg every morning to clear the voice. The tenor always sounds tender and charming, the baritone sympathetic and resonant, and the bass has a powerful delivery.

SITE: Place for composing verses.

SKIFF: Any small boat carrying a woman. "Come aboard my skiff!"

SLEEP: Too much of it thickens the blood.

SNAKE: Very poisonous.

SNEEZE: After someone says "Bless you," launch a discussion about the historical origin of that expression. It's witty to say, "Russians and Poles don't speak to each other, they sneeze at each other!"

SNIPER: More fearsome than the enemy.

SOIL: Feel great affection for the soil.

SOLICITOR: Salacious word.

SOLID: Always followed by "as a rock."

SOMBREUIL (Mlle. de): Recall the glass of blood.

SOMNAMBULIST: Walks at night along the crests of rooftops.

SON-IN-LAW: "My son-in-law, all is ruined!"

SOUTH (cooking of): Always calls for garlic. Thunder against it.

SOUTHERNERS: All poets.

SPELLING: Believe in it like geometry. Is not necessary when one has style.

SPINACH: The stomach's broom. Never miss a chance to use Prudhomme's famous quip: "I dislike it, and I'm glad I dislike it, for if I liked it I'd eat it, and I can't stand it." (Some people find this perfectly logical and won't laugh.)

SPIRITUALISM: The best philosophical system.

SPURS: Improve the look of boots.

SPY: Always from the upper crust (v. *swindler*).

SQUARING THE CIRCLE: We don't know what this is, but one should shrug one's shoulders when speaking of it.

SQUIRE (Country): Hold them in the utmost contempt.

STACK: Stacking weapons is the most difficult maneuver in the national guard.

STALLION: Always vigorous. A woman should not know the difference between a stallion and a horse.

STAR: Everyone has his own, like the Emperor.

STOCK MARKET: Barometer of public opinion.

STOCK TRADERS: All thieves.

STOICISM: Is impossible.

STOMACH: Every illness originates in the stomach.

STONES: Should always be brought back from the seashore.

STOOGES: Word used by fanatical republicans to designate the police.

STRONG: As a Turk, an ox, a horse, Hercules. That fellow must be strong, he's all sinew.

STUART (Marie): Be moved by her fate.

STUD FARMS: The question of. Good topic for parliamentary debate.

STUDENT: All of them wear red berets and shabby trousers, smoke their pipes in the street, and never study.

SUFFRAGE (Universal): The final step in political science.

SUICIDE: Proof of cowardice.

SUIT (Black): In the provinces, the ultimate in ceremony and inconvenience.

SUMMER: Always exceptional (v. *winter*).

SUPPERS *under the Regency*: They uncorked more wit than champagne.

SURGEONS: Are hardhearted; call them butchers.

SWALLOW: Never call them anything but "harbingers of spring." Since no one knows where they come from, say they have arrived "from the beyond" (poetic).

SWAN: Sings before dying. Its wing can break a man's leg. The Swan of Cambrai was not a bird but a man named Fénelon. The Swan of Mantua is Virgil. The Swan of Pesaro is Rossini.

SWINDLER: Always from the upper crust (v. *spy*).

SWORD: The only one known is Damocles's. Be nostalgic for the time when people wore them. "Brave as his sword." Some swords have never been used. The French want to be governed by it.

SYBARITES: Thunder against them.

SYPHILIS: Pretty much everyone has it.

## T

TALLEYRAND (Prince): Thunder against him.

TARTAN (vessel): “Come into my tartan, beautiful dark-eyed Grecian” (romance).  
 TASTE: Simplicity is always in good taste. Should always be said to a woman apologizing for the modesty of her toilette.  
 TAXES: One should avoid paying them (v. *customs*).  
 TEN (The Council of): We’re not sure what it was, but it was formidable! Deliberately masked. Still makes one shudder.  
 THICKET: Always dark and impenetrable.  
 THINKING: Painful. The things that force you into it are generally abandoned.  
 THIRTEEN: Avoid having thirteen people at table, it brings bad luck. Wags should never fail to joke, “What difference does it make? I’ll eat for two”—or if there are ladies present, to ask if one of them is expecting.  
 THUNDERS FROM THE VATICAN: Scoff at them.  
 TIGHTS: Very alluring.  
 TOAD: Secretes a deadly venom. Lives inside of rocks.  
 TOBACCO: The kind sold by the Tobacco Authority is not as good as the contraband. A pinch of snuff suits a man of letters. Cause of all diseases of the brain and spinal chord.  
 TOILETTE (Ladies’): Excites the imagination.  
 TONIC (for purifying the blood): Should be taken in private.  
 TOOTH: Ruined by: cider, tobacco, candies, ice cream, sleeping with one’s mouth open, and drinking wine after the soup course.  
 Eyetooth: dangerous to remove because it’s related to the eye. Having a tooth pulled “is no picnic.”  
 TOYS: Should always be educational.  
 TRANSFER: The only verb used by army men.  
 TROUBADOUR: Fitting motif for a pendulum.

## U

UKASE: Call any authoritarian decree a “ukase”: it rankles the government.  
 UNDERGARMENT: One always shows too much, and never enough.  
 UNION OF THE ROYAL FAMILIES: Keep hoping for it.  
 UNIVERSITY: *Alma mater*.  
 UNLEASH: One unleashes dogs and wicked passions.  
 URCHIN: Always from Paris.  
 USUM (*Ad*): Latin locution that works well in the phrase *Ad usum Delphini*. Should always be used when speaking of a woman named Delphine.

## V

VACCINE: Frequent only vaccinated individuals.  
 VELVET: On clothing, sign of distinction and wealth.  
 VERRES: He still hasn’t been forgiven.  
 VILE: Should be said of any artistic or literary work that *Le Figaro* considers unworthy of admiration.  
 VIZIER: Quakes at the sight of a pull-cord.  
 VOLTAIRE: Known for his awful “grimace.” His knowledge was superficial.  
 VOYAGE: Should be taken quickly.  
 VOYAGER: Always intrepid.

## W

WAG: All Parisians are wags, even though nine out of every ten are from the provinces. People in Paris don’t do any work.  
 WAGNER: Snicker when his name is mentioned, and make jokes about the music of the future.  
 WALK: Always take a walk after dinner, it helps the digestion.  
 WALTZ: Wax indignant at. Lascivious and impure dance that is appropriate only for old women.  
 WAR: Thunder against it.  
 WATCH: Only good if made in Geneva. In fairy tales, when a character pulls out his pocket watch, it should always be an onion: the joke never fails. “Does your watch keep good time?” “The sun rises and sets by it.”  
 WATER: Paris water causes stomach aches. Seawater holds you up to swim. Cologne water smells good.  
 WEALTH: Compensates for everything, even lack of respect.  
 WEATHER: Endless topic of conversation. Cause of every illness. Always complain about it.  
 WELL-WRITTEN: An expression used by porters to designate the serial novels they enjoy.  
 WHITEWASH IN CHURCHES: Thunder against it. This artistic fury suits one very well.  
 WILD ANIMAL TAMERS: Use obscene methods.  
 WINDBAG: His only use is to inflate balloons.  
 WINDMILL: Looks good in a landscape.  
 WINES: Topic of conversation among men. The best is Bordeaux, since doctors prescribe it. The worse it tastes, the more natural it is.  
 WINTER: Always exceptional (v. *summer*). Better for health than the other seasons.  
 WITNESS: One must always refuse to be a witness in court cases: you never know where it can lead.

WOMAN: Person of the opposite sex. One of Adam's ribs. Never say "the little woman" but "my wife," or better still, "my better half."

WOODEN SHOES: A rich man who started off poor always arrived in Paris wearing wooden shoes.

WOODS: The woods set you dreaming. Are perfect for composing verses. In autumn, while taking a stroll, one should declaim, "From the remnants of our woods...", etc.

WORKER: Always honest, unless he's rioting.

WORN: Everything old shows wear and everything that shows wear is old. Keep this in mind when buying antiques.

WRITING: *Currente calamo* is the excuse for stylistic or grammatical errors.

## Y

YAWN: One should say, "Forgive me, it isn't the company, it's my stomach."

YOUNG GIRL: Pronounce these words shyly. All young girls are pale, frail, and pure. Keep them away from any kind of book, visits to museums, the theater, and especially the monkey house at the zoo.

YOUNG MAN: Always sewing wild oats. He should be! Be amazed when he isn't.

YOUTH: How beautiful youth is! Is wasted on the young. Declaim these Italian verses whenever possible, even without understanding them: "*O Primavera! Gioventù dell'anno! O Gioventù! Primavera della vita!*"

YVETOT: See Yvetot and die! (v. *Naples* and *Seville*).